

4:16-21 English Standard Version Anglicised (ESVUK)

God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgement, because as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot[a] love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Footnotes:

1 John 4:20 Some manuscripts how can he
English Standard Version Anglicised (ESVUK)

The Power of Love In memory of Jennifer

On this Father's Day I'm pleased to have two boys, Isaac and Nathanael call me "father". But I'm also reminded of Jennifer who would also, regularly call me "Father". Although common in Africa, and in print from our Confessional documents, It's not the usual form of address for a Lutheran Clergyman. We prefer "Pastor" meaning Shepherd of Souls. But I long since had given up correcting Jennifer. The title fit because to her I was her Spiritual Father. And certainly the title isn't without Biblical precedent. The Apostle Paul, accepts the title saying, "I am writing you in this way not to shame you but to admonish you as my *beloved children*. Granted you have ten thousand

guardians in Christ, you have only one father. It was I who begot you in Christ Jesus through my preaching of the Gospel.” (1 Cor 4:14-17).

Indeed Jennifer was likewise “begotten” in Christ Jesus by means of the Gospel first in baptism and then sustained through preaching and teaching. She attended confirmation classes with June being received as a communicant member as an adult, now many years ago..

Jennifer Ireland sat right up front with June Grant, lectern side front row. In recent years Jennifer and June would sit there with the children also. In fact, they would often be here for the 9:30 a.m. start before any of the children were seated. I think that our Sunday School superintendent Linda Honke, along with any other observers, could easily testify that Jennifer really wanted to be here and not just be here, but participate. She sang with us, read with us and prayed with us.

In Bible Class, Jennifer would not be deterred from participating. Now, I’ve always found it to be a challenging class to teach. As you know, those with graduate level university education are learning alongside those for whom English is a Second language. But knowledge must never be equated with wisdom or one’s spirituality. Jennifer Ireland had -- or at least approached having, more wisdom than most people I know, possessing what Jesus exhorted us to all have, “the faith of a little child”.

She knew the insight gained in Sunday school so often lost in adulthood. The answer to most Sunday School questions, Bible Study questions and even life’s most vexing questions is “Jesus”. And to be more specific “Jesus and his love”. Jennifer knew the essence of Christ’s love for us. Anyone who spent any time in Bible class at all will know that the name of Jesus and his love for us wasn’t far from

her lips. Those who attended can likely hear her voice “Jesus died on the cross for us”.

This is love. How deep it is. Grow in knowledge of it. Live in the wisdom of it. John, the author of our epistle, spoke so simply of it yet so deeply of it he deserves the title “St. John Apostle and theologian”. We hear of the Father’s love in this epistle. “God is love. 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. We hear of Jesus as the propitiation of our sin. The penalty of sin which is God’s wrath including eternal death and suffering is appeased through the sacrifice of Christ. That sacrifice was no easy feat for Jesus since he was truly human, experiencing the frailty and weakness of human flesh”. That humanity joined with his divinity made him especially valuable and powerful. There is good reason for John to be associated with the eagle. His thoughts soar through the heavens.

Now John’s purpose was not to leave thoughts soaring through the heavens. Nor did this Jesus whom he proclaimed intend to be content inhabiting the heavens. He came to earth. He took on our human flesh. He suffered. He died. He identified with us. He walks beside us even now. He shares his love freely that we might love others. If anyone says, “I love God”, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot[a] love God whom he has not seen.

There can be no greater message I can preach other than Jesus. The God enfleshed who walks beside us even now. Who ultimately walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death.

As a spiritual father or even as a pastor I can only join you so far along life’s journey. I can hold your hand. Your loved one’s can hold your hands, but only to the gate of life and death. Your friend Jesus can go

the distance. Remember the Ascension? Jesus took human flesh, exactly like our own into heaven. He gives us hope that we too may rise and bring this body with our soul into eternity. Jesus will walk with us into eternity.

And in His love there shall be no fear. There shall be no fear for Jennifer nor for we who believe. Such is the power of God's love.

Amen.